

News Release
U.S. Department of Justice
United States Attorney
District of Rhode Island



March 1, 2006



Guilty plea to firearms charge

John Polanco, 22, of Providence, pled guilty today to being a felon in possession of a firearm. Providence Police arrested Polanco in September after he fled from a car and tossed a handgun from his waistband.

The office of United States Attorney Robert Clark Corrente announced the guilty plea, which Polanco entered today before U.S. District Court Judge William E. Smith in U.S. District Court, Providence.

At the plea hearing, Assistant U.S. Attorney Peter F. Neronha said that the government could prove that, on September 29, Polanco was in a car that sped away from Providence Police officers who were attempting to make a traffic stop at Anthony and Puritan Streets. After the fleeing car collided with a parked car at the intersection of Dean and Promenade Streets, three men fled from the vehicle on foot. Officers saw one of the men, later identified as Polanco, remove a handgun from his waistband and toss it away. Officers caught up with Polanco, arrested him, and retrieved the handgun, a .40 caliber pistol.

Polanco has a prior felony conviction for assault with a dangerous weapon. He is incarcerated at the Rhode Island Adult Correctional Institutions pending sentencing for the federal offense, which is scheduled for May 19. The maximum penalty for being a felon in possession of a firearm is ten years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine.

Providence Police and the **Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives** investigated the case. Assistant U.S. Attorney Neronha is prosecuting it as part of **Project Safe Neighborhoods**, a Department of Justice initiative against gun crimes. Under Project Safe Neighborhoods, the U.S. Attorney's Office, working with Providence Police, ATF, the Rhode Island Attorney General's Office, and other agencies, aggressively prosecutes federal firearms offenses in an effort to incarcerate those responsible for gun violence and deter others from committing gun crimes. Since 2001, federal firearms prosecutions in Rhode Island have more than doubled and gun offenders have been sentenced to a total of more than 700 years in federal prison.

Contact: 401-709-5032 thomas.connell@usdoj.gov

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